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ABSTRACT

Possible origins for the use of "sorrow" as a negation in Hiberno-English are considered. Much of the evidence examined here comes from English literature. It is concluded that the uses of "sorrow" as negator and as euphemism probably reflect Celtic substrate influence. Structural evidence indicates that "sorrow" negation has grammaticalized properties similar to those for "devil" negation. Geographical and chronological evidence suggests that "sorrow" negation developed early in Scotland and that it was restricted mainly to Scotland and Ireland. Cultural evidence shows "sorrow" negation to be part of a long-standing tradition of taboo and euphemism, one not unique to Celtic lands but certainly robust in those regions. Although several words in Irish and Scottish Gaelic are partial translation equivalents for "sorrow," only two have attested uses as negators and euphemisms for the devil: "donas" and "tubaiste." Of these, the former seems to have been an especially important word in Scotland and Ireland, although it may never have been a full-fledged negator in Irish. The most likely explanation for the spread of this distinctive negation type is that "sorrow" forms were first used by Scottish settlers in Ulster, providing superstrate influence for Irish speakers acquiring Hiberno-English. (MSE)

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TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

Centre for Language and Communication Studies

"Sorrow penny yee payed for my drink": taboo, euphemism and a phantom substrate

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CLCS Occasional Paper No.43
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"Sorrow penny yee payed for my drink": taboo, euphemism and a phantom substrate*

by

Terence Odlin

0 Introduction

For about a hundred years, if not longer, linguists have offered competing explanations for the sources of Hiberno-English. From at least as early as an 1896 article by William Burke, some have attempted to account for the distinctiveness of the English of Ireland largely in terms of retentions of patterns found in the dialects of Britain. Yet about as early as Burke, other observers have looked to Irish as a major source, as seen, for example, in the writing of P. W. Joyce (1910/1988).[1] To this day, different explanations continue to be offered, and now universalist arguments are among those seen in the literature (e.g. Guilefoyle 1986). The diversity of opinions is all the greater since some scholars have opted for extreme positions: Bliss (1984), for example, insisted on the primacy of the Irish substrate, whereas Lass (1990) has been just as convinced about the primacy of the British English superstrate. Many more researchers, however, have invoked multicausal arguments, as seen, for example, in articles by Harris (1984, 1986). Those familiar with other language contact situations such as Caribbean creoles can easily recognize how similar the issue of sources is in many historical periods and in many parts of the world (e.g., Thomason and Kaufman 1988, Mufwene 1990, 1993, 1994).

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Although scholars disagree about the importance of substrate influence in Hiberno-English, they usually agree on what the Irish pattern is that is hypothesized to occasion the influence, as seen, for example, in the discussion by Harris (1986) of habitual verb phrases. Whether or not everybody agrees with Harris that the habitual tenses of Irish contributed to the rise of habitual *do* constructions, most researchers probably concur on what the verb patterns in Irish are that may have occasioned cross-linguistic influence. Without such agreement, it would be much more difficult to determine the merits of substratist and other positions.

Unfortunately, there exist some cases where it is not so easy to assume what Irish pattern may be the source for a Hiberno-English construction. One instance of this is seen in the use of the form *sorrow* as a negator, which is the topic of this paper. The discussion to follow consists of five parts: 1) a description of the basic characteristics of *sorrow* negation; 2) a survey of the reasons for believing that substrate influence is involved; 3) a look at forms in Irish and Scottish Gaelic that may be the basis for *sorrow* negation; 4) a provisional explanation for the diffusion of substrate influence in the use of *sorrow* in Hiberno-English; 5) a summary and some thoughts on the implications of this problem.

1 Basic characteristics

Whatever the source of *sorrow* negation, there are three facts that any explanation must take into account. The first is that *sorrow* can indeed function as a negator, as in a citation in Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* (*EDD*) (1898) from an Ulster source: *sorra one o' them was equal to Charlie* (= not one of them was equal ...), where the spelling variant *sorra* is used.[2] The second fact is that *sorrow* as a negator is related to other senses of the same lexeme; most importantly, *sorrow* has functioned as a euphemism for the Devil, as seen in another Irish source cited by Wright: *her people's as proud as the very sarra* (= as the very devil). The third fact is that *sorrow* was once widely employed as a negator. There is ample evidence for all three characteristics just stated, as seen in the copious citations in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) (Simpson and Weiner 1989), *The Scottish National Dictionary* (*SND*) (Grant and Murison 1952), Traynor's (1953) dictionary of English in Donegal, as well as in Wright's dictionary. Moreover, there is other evidence. For exam-

ple, Joyce (1910/1988, p.70) claimed that *sorrow* negation is something "you often hear".

2 Evidence for substrate influence

Some of the strongest evidence linking *sorrow* negation to substrate influence is that in Scots and Hiberno-English, where the collocations of *sorrow* closely resemble those for *devil*, a negator with clear cross-linguistic correspondences. Table 1 lists some of the patterns of *devil* negation that occur in Irish and Scottish Gaelic as well in Scots and Hiberno-English: Table 2 shows that the same collocations with *devil* are also attested for *sorrow* (cf. Odlin 1995). Aside from the patterns in Table 2, there are other correspondences between *devil* negation and *sorrow* negation. For example, Joyce (1910/1988, p.70) notes the phrase *Sorrow a know I know* (= I don't know), which is the exact parallel of a *devil* negation pattern noted by Henry (1957, p.130), *Devil a know I know*. This pattern, moreover, has clear Irish correspondences: *diabhal a mbeadh a fhios agam* (devil that knowledge [is] at-me = I have no knowledge) and *an diabhal an bhfeadar* (the devil whether I-know).

HIBERNO-ENGLISH	SCOTS	GAELIC
divil a one	deil ane deil a ane	diabhal duine diabhal ceann
divil a many divil a much	deil a mony deil a muckle	diabhal móràn
devil a the like of it divil a such	deil be-lickit	dheamhan a leithéid
divvle th' bit divil a bit	deil the bit devill inche dewill a bitt	an diabhol mir diabhal é
divil a fear	Deil a fear	diabhal (dheamhan) a heagail do

Table 1
Correspondences in *devil* negation

In Table 1 the collocations with *devil* and the Gaelic equivalents *diabhal* (devil) and *dheamhan* (demon) suggest a considerable degree of grammaticalization, which, as defined by Kurylowicz, "consists in the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from a less grammatical to a more grammatical status" (1965/1975, p.52). Neither *devil* negation nor *sorrow* negation is simply a case of what is sometimes loosely called an "idiom". Idioms are typically more inflexible: thus, *kick the pail* is not an idiom equivalent to *kick the bucket*, nor is **a rock's throw* an acceptable subsitute for *a stone's throw*. By contrast, *devil a bit*, *sorrow a bit*, and *not a bit* are all interchangeable; in this sense, then, both *devil* and *sorrow* are equivalent to the fully grammaticalized negator *not*. The kind of grammaticalization seen in *sorrow* and *devil* negation is less thoroughgoing but still similar to what Nyrop (1930) and others have described in the development of French *pas* (step) into a fully elaborated syntactic negator.[3]

***devil* negation**	***sorrow* negation**
divil a one	the sorrow ane sorrow one
divil a many divil a much	sorrow much sorrow mair
devil a the like of it divil a such	sorrow such a
divvle th' bit divil a bit	sorra a bit
divil a fear	sorra the fear

Table 2
Correspondences in *sorrow* negation

The structural correspondences just considered are not the only evidence for substrate influence. Geographical and chronological facts also show important parallels between *devil* and *sorrow* negation. Although *devil* negation does occur in other areas besides the Celtic lands, the patterns of grammaticalization in Table 1 seem to

be restricted to Scotland and Ireland. Moreover, the earliest instance of *devil* negation is found in the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (*DOST*) (Craigie 1931-) and comes from the fifteenth or early sixteenth century, about half a century before the first citation of an English author, Nicholas Udall, in the *OED*. In the case of *sorrow*, the editors of the *OED* and *EDD* concur that the negation pattern is found primarily in Scotland and Ireland. Although *sorrow* appeared early in England as an imprecation, the *OED*'s earliest citations of *sorrow* as a negator come from Scottish sources, and virtually all of the instances of negation in the *OED* and *EDD* come from the Celtic lands.[4] The source texts for the first citations of *sorrow* negation did not appear until the later sixteenth century, but these suggest that it showed considerable grammaticalization early on. The *OED* cites the following example as the earliest instance: *sorrow mair they socht it*, which appears in a poem dated to 1573, "The Sege of the Castel of Edinburgh" (Cranstoun 1891, p.265).[5] The collocation *sorrow mair* appears in yet another sixteenth century Scottish source cited by the *OED*, and this suggests that it was already grammaticalized, i.e. routinized, before 1600. Forms such as *devil more* do not seem to be common in Hiberno-English or Scots texts (literary or otherwise). On the other hand, Henry (1957) and Taniguchi (1972) cite comparative forms that can co-occur with *devil*: *better* and *longer*. Moreover, a speaker of Hiberno-English is known to have used a similar expression, *divil a one more ever I seen* (Odlin 1995), and another speaker is recorded as saying *He was able to talk but divil a much more than that*.[6]

Along with the structural, geographical, and chronological facts, there is cultural evidence that substrate influence is a source for *sorrow* negation. As noted earlier, *sorrow* is a euphemism for the Devil, and this function is consonant with a long-standing tradition of verbal taboo in the Celtic lands. Euphemism and taboo are not, of course, unique to Scotland and Ireland: such practices are probably universal, if James Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1935-1937) is any guide.[7] Indeed, in American and some other varieties of English, the use of *heck* for *hell* and *darn* for *damn* suggests that *sorrow* negation is only a little more exotic. However, no one can doubt that the euphemistic tradition has been strong in Scotland and Ireland and thus a likely source for constructions such as *sorrow* negation.

Folklorists in Scotland have collected much information about various kinds of taboos, many of which are described by John Gregorson Campbell (1900). He lists several Gaelic names for the Devil, as well as euphemisms for the fairies, for various animals, and for auspicious or inauspicious times. Other lexical evidence comes from a card file at the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Compiled largely from entries to the *Scottish National Dictionary*, this file lists over sixty different euphemisms for the Devil along with an additional two dozen names that begin with the adjective *auld*. There are probably several reasons why Scotland should have such a strong taboo tradition in this regard. With many parts of Scotland being culturally conservative areas, linguists and folklorists have no doubt found it easier to document early traditions in comparison with areas that rapidly industrialized. Moreover, there was a fairly early awareness of the distinctiveness of Scottish traditions, as seen, for example, in the work of Walter Scott. Most significantly, perhaps, Scotland was home to several language communities including Gaelic, Pictish, Latin, Norse, French, English (or Scots), and a northern cousin of Welsh. Although most of these languages have not survived, modern Scots certainly shows vestiges of these earlier linguistic and cultural traditions.

Connected with the multilingual traditions of Scotland is the role that specific forms of Christianity may have played. One of the most interesting references involving *sorrow* comes from the proceedings of a Kirk Session in Dumfries in 1659:

> Being admonished by a minister it is alledged he answered with some railing expressions to wit, ... *the divell a penny ye payed for my drink*, the said Thomas being sumond, called upon & compeiring [but] *confesses that he said sorrow penny yee payed for my drink*.

This passage, which comes from a card file at the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, is especially clear evidence that *sorrow* was a euphemism. The accused person, Thomas, sees a way to exculpate himself from a charge of blasphemy or profanity by claiming to have used *sorrow* negation instead of *devil* negation. This example also suggets that *sorrow* negation may owe nothing to either a Gaelic or a Catholic tradition. However, other evidence suggests that a

euphemistic tradition was just as strong in the Catholic parts of the Gaelic-speaking Hebrides. In his lexicon of Gaelic words from South Uist and Eriskay, Father Allan McDonald writes:

> It would be considered dreadful and as grating on all their traditional feelings [...] if a priest in preaching were to say *diabhol*, devil. It is not so much so on the mainland. I gave a copy of a hymn to an old man and *diabhol* came into it, and he told me that he changed the word as he could not go to bed with *diabhol* on his lips. The devil is called *Am fear mór*, the great fellow; *Am fear dubh*, the black one; *Am fear nach can mi*, the one I won't mention; *Am fear as miosa* [the worst one]; *An riabhach*, the brindled one; *An droch-chreutair*, the evil creature; *An t-annspiorad*, the evil spirit. (1897/1972. p.98)

An t-Ainspiorad is known to occur in Irish (Ó Dónaill 1977), albeit with a different spelling, and at least three of the other Gaelic names that McDonald cites are attested for Ireland in card files for the archives of the Department of Irish Folklore at University College Dublin: *Am fear mór*, *Am fear dubh*, and *An riabhach*, along with other names such as *An Droch-bhuachaill* (The Evil Boy). Accordingly, there can be little doubt that the euphemistic tradition had its roots in both Catholicism and Protestantism as well as in Gaelic and English.

3 Possible substrate sources

The facts just reviewed point to the likelihood of substrate influence, but it remains uncertain what word or words might be the source for *sorrow* negation. Ideally, it should be possible to find a substrate form that meets each of the following criteria: 1) the form is found in both Irish and Scottish Gaelic; 2) it is more or less a translation equivalent of the core meaning of *sorrow*; 3) it has a semantic extension involving the Devil in both languages; 4) it has a further extension involving negation in both languages. One form that meets all four criteria (albeit problematically) is *donas* (misfortune, misery), and this word will therefore receive the closest attention. Another form, however, meets nearly all of the criteria: *tubaiste* (calamity). The English glosses given for these only weakly characterize the range of senses each word has, senses which will be considered in some detail. It will also be necessary to consider

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some complications which make a thorough explanation for *sorrow* negation difficult to provide.

Before *tubaiste* and *donas* are discussed, some less likely candidates should be considered. One is *creach* (loss, ruin). Although the basic sense of the word is similar to those of *tubaiste* and *donas*, the highly detailed *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla* (Ó Dónaill 1977) does not indicate that this form has ever served either as a negator or as a euphemism for the Devil, nor does the most comprehensive dictionary of Scottish Gaelic (Dwelly 1920/1973). Exactly the same problems arise with *brón* (mourning, sorrow), a word obviously closer to the core sense of *sorrow*: there seems to be no evidence that *brón* ever functioned as a negator or as a euphemism for the Devil. What holds true for *creach* and *brón* also holds true for other partial translation equivalents of *sorrow*: *cumha* (loneliness, parting, sorrow), *diachair* (pain, sorrow), *mairg* (woe, sorrow), *léan* (anguish, woe), and *trua* (pity). A different kind of possibility is seen in *shoraidh duit!*, which Ó Dónaill translates as "bad scran to you!"[8] Once again, however, Ó Dónaill does not list any senses specifically associated with negation or with the Devil. Still another problem is that Ó Dónaill asserts that when *soraidh* functions as an imprecation, it takes the lenited form *shoraidh*; in this form, the word-initial consonant is /h/, not /s/, and thus the form is hardly a transparent source for any putative transfer to English. A somewhat stronger possibility is *dólás* (sorrow, contrition). Still again, neither Ó Dónaill nor Dwelly has anything to suggest that this form has had semantic extensions of the kind seen in English *sorrow*. Even so, an authority no less than John Gregorson Campbell translates *an dòlas mòr* as "the big sorrow" (1900, p.291), which is clearly parallel with a Scots expression for the Devil, *the Muckle Sorra*, noted in the *SND*. How Campbell reached this conclusion is not clear, however, and there appears to be no other evidence supporting his identification.

In contrast to all of the candidates considered so far, there are three words cited by Ó Siadhail which are euphemisms for the Devil that can function as negators: *fial*, *riach*, and *diabhach* (1989, p.331). However, the case for any of these as the source of *sorrow* is just as doubtful as for any of the terms in the previous paragraph. The problem with *fial* etc. is that none of them has a sense which is semantically close to the core meaning of *sorrow*. On the other hand,

a related form *diach* (deuce) is a more likely candidate. Like *fial*, *riach*, and *diabhach*, it can be a euphemism and a negator, according to Ó Dónaill, yet again without any sense close to the core meaning of *sorrow*. However, there is a phonetically similar form *diachair* (pain, sorrow) that may well have been a candidate for shortening to *diach*. In fact, Ó Dónaill lists another lemma also spelled *diach* meaning "fate, desert; ill-treatement, punishment". It is conceivable that this lemma is related to *diachair*, but the semantic differences leave some room for doubt. Another problem with considering *diach* to be the source of *sorrow* negation is that it does not seem to be used in Scottish Gaelic: it is not listed in Dwelly's dictionary or in one edited by Maclennan (1925/1979). Thus *diach* fails to meet the first criterion given at the beginning of this section and it may not satisfy the second either.

A far more probable candidate is *tubaiste*. Some of the usages cited by Ó Dónaill have senses that simply convey misfortune: e.g. *Ba mhillteanach an tubaiste é*, "it was a terrible disaster". On the other hand, there are also instances that clearly allude to the Devil: *D'imigh an tubaiste ort!* "You are the dickens!" and *Cé sa tubaiste a dúirt sin leat?* "Who the devil said that to you?" Moreover, Ó Dónaill lists instances where it is indeed a negator: *Don tubaiste ceann!* "Devil a one!" and *Tubaiste d'fhiafraithe ort!* "don't be so inquisitive!" Clearly, there are close parallels here with phrases such as *Whar i' the sorro' he cou'd be* and *the sorra one* cited by Wright (1898). The only drawback to viewing *tubaiste* as the chief source for *sorrow* constructions is that the range of senses of *tubaiste* in Irish may not be common in Scottish Gaelic. Dwelly does list *tubaist* as a word but gives no information to suggest this form has ever been used as a negator or euphemism for the Devil. Likewise, other dictionaries (e.g. Maclennan 1925/1979) do not suggest *tubaist* in Scotland has had the same range of senses seen in Ireland.

The strongest case can be made for *donas*, even though there are also problems. In Irish, this word has various non-metaphoric senses listed by Ó Dónaill: e.g. *Dul i ndonas, chun an donais* "to get worse; to go to the bad". Morever, other citations in Ó Dónaill make clear that it has also been used as a euphemism for the Devil: e.g. *D'imigh an donas air* "he is gone to the deuce", *Cad é an donas a thug anseo é?* "What the deuce brought him here?", and *In ainm an donais* "in the devil's name". Yet the only suggestion Ó Dónaill gives that *donas*

may also be a negator is *Is cuma liom sa donas* "I don't care a rap". Although the English translation suggests a negator in the Irish, this idiom is not so straightforward:

Is cuma	liom	sa	donas
Is equal	with-me	in-the	devil

The use of *donas* here is as an intensifier but not as a syntactic negator: if *sa donas* is deleted, the transalation will simply be "I don't care". Interestingly, Ó Dónaill's entry for *tubaiste* shows a similar possibility: *Is cuma liom sa tubaiste* "I don't care a damn". The issue of syntactic negation will be discussed in more detail below.

Although the status of *donas* as a negator in Irish is problematic, this is not the case in Scottish Gaelic. Dwelly (1920/1973) lists a clear instance of syntactic negation: *an donas bonn a bhiodh agam* "devil a coin would I have" (literally, the misery/devil coin that would-be at-me). As his translation makes clear, *donas* is equated with the Devil, as it is in some usages that do not involve negation: e.g. *thig an donas ri iomradh* "speak of the devil and he will appear" (literally, comes the misery/devil during speaking). An important insight evident in the literal translation of *an donas bonn a bhiodh agam* is that this example involves a highly grammaticalized focus-construction similar to what Ó Siadhail (1989, pp.327f.) describes for *devil* negation in Irish (cf. Odlin 1995). Other attestations of *donas* as a negator are not easy to come by, but there is one in a Jacobite ballad anthologized and translated by John Lorne Campbell (1933, pp.162f.):

'S ged fhuair sibh làmh-an-uachdar
Aon uair oirnn le seòrsa tapaig,
An donas blàr ri 'bheò-san
Ni 'm Feòladair tuilleadh tapaidh.

And though you overcame us
Once through a kind of mishap,
In devil a battle in his life-time
Shall again the Butcher conquer.

This ballad is believed by Watson (1932) to have been composed about five years after the battle of Culloden, which took place in 1746 (*the Butcher, am Feòladair*, being a reference to the leader of the

Hanoverian forces, the Duke of Cumberland). Accordingly, negation with *donas* goes back at least to the mid-eighteenth century.

As stated before, there seems to be little evidence that *donas* has ever been a syntactic negator in Irish as it has in Scottish Gaelic. On the other hand, there are clear examples of its pragmatic function as a negator, i.e. a form that can convey the two speech acts associated with negation, denial and refusal (Tottie 1982). Examples of such use appear in the next two paragraphs, but here it will be useful to consider the syntax and pragmatics of negation. Although syntactic negation normally entails pragmatic negation, the converse is not true: denial and refusal can be expressed with little or no syntactic elaboration. Function words such as *not* show, by definition, considerable syntactic elaboration while other words can show an intermediate status between ordinary lexical forms and grammatical morphemes (bound or unbound). The form *devil* in *devil* negation has this intermediate status in that it resembles *not* in constructions such as *devil a bit* (cf. *not a bit*). In Irish *devil* negation also involves grammaticalization although it often employs devices rarely found in the English equivalents such as the focus construction noted above. On the other hand, both English and Irish have forms which function as negators but which show only a negligible degree of syntactic elaboration. *The hell I will* clearly involves negation but shows relatively little elaboration. Although it resembles *not* since it can negate a clause, it shows fewer possibilities for collocation: e.g. **the hell a bit* and **the hell a penny* are ungrammatical. Irish also has negators showing little grammaticalization: e.g. *Scrios Dé má tá fhios agam* "I am damned if I know" (Ó Siadhail 1989, p.326). The literal translation suggests that the negation here involves little more than a lexical item:

Scrios	Dé	má tá	fhios	agam
Destruction	of-God	if is	knowledge	at-me

Here, *Scrios Dé* only functions as a negator in that it evokes a pragmatic interpretation equivalent in propositional terms to the blander *Níl a fhios agam* (I don't know), where *níl* is a fully grammaticalized negator. Ó Dónaill (1977) offers no examples suggesting that *scrios* has ever functioned in other ways as a negator.

Although Scottish Gaelic has attested uses of *donas* as a fairly elaborated syntactic negator (i.e. *donas blàr* and *donas bonn*), there

do not appear to be such cases in Irish. On the other hand, *donas* can function as a marginal syntactic negator in Irish, as seen in *mo dhonas is mo dhothairne orm ... mur racha me a d'iarraidh nighne an ríogh* ("my sorrow and my affliction on me ... unless I go to ask [for the hand of the] daughter of the king"). In this example, which comes from a folktale (Laoide 1901, p.81), a boy expresses his intention to ask for the king's daughter, his resolve being expressed by the formulaic *mo dhonas is mo dhothairne orm* along with the implicit negator *mur* (unless). In effect, the boy's resolve is expressed through the multiple negators *dhonas ... dhothairne ... mur ....* At the same time, *donas* has only a marginal syntactic status here. It is understood as a negator only through a pragmatic interpretation like that which enables listeners to conclude that *Scrios Dé má* negates the following clause.

A somewhat similar example of such negation is seen in Hiberno-English. A folktale narrated by Patrick Kennedy includes an episode where some bargaining for a goat transpires:

> "What'll you take for her?" "'Deed I don't wish to part with her, she's a valuable beast, but you're good neighbours, and you never lose what your neighbour gets: you must have her for five an' twenty guineas." "Five and twenty dhonnasses (woes)! say ten pounds, and we'll be thinking of it." The end was, they reckoned twenty guineas into Gilla's hand and took the goat home. (Kennedy 1870, p.100)

The seller's initial price, twenty-five guineas, is countered by an offer of ten pounds before the buyer and seller agree on twenty guineas. A pluralized form of *donas* functions pragmatically as a negator, with the parenthetical *woes* being Kennedy's interpolation. This case is interesting for three reasons. First, it shows that *donas* can function as a negator apart from the formulaic *mo dhonas is mo dhothairne orm*. Second, it indicates that there was probably a kind of pragmatic negation in Irish that has been rarely noted: in all likelihood the Hiberno-English here reflects an earlier substrate. Third, Kennedy's interpolation, "woes", may misrepresent a meaning of *donas* for older speakers of Irish in his native area, the northwestern part of County Wexford. Kennedy grew up in the early nineteenth century, a time when Irish was disappearing in the region, although nearby the language was still quite alive (Fitzgerald

1984). For older speakers, *dhonnasses* may have meant "devils".

The passage from Kennedy shows that *donas* is a real though uncommon form in Hiberno-English: neither the *OED* nor the *EDD* records this form, nor does Joyce (1910/1988) in his extensive glossary. Still, *donas* was no doubt a widespread word in Irish and Scottish Gaelic, and there are good reasons to believe that it influenced not only negation but also related semantic patterns in the English of the Celtic lands. In both Scots and Hiberno-English, the form *donsie* is widely attested with meanings such as "miserable" and "unfortunate", as in a quotation from Allan Ramsay, *through some donsie desert*, dated to 1720 by the *OED*. The *EDD* and *SND* also list it, as do other sources such as Joyce.[9] Interestingly, it is usually considered to be a parallel case of lexical borrowing with *sonsie*, "happy, fortunate", from the Irish and Scottish Gaelic form *sonas* "happiness", "good luck", etc. Although *donsie* rarely if ever has any connotations involving the Devil, Patterson (1880) records a form *donse*, "devil", in a glossary for Counties Antrim and Down, a fact noted in the Appendix of the *EDD*.

The facts concerning *donas* thus give a mixed impression. On the one hand, there is evidence that it functioned as a negator on a syntactic par with *devil*, *sorrow*, and *diabhal/diabhol* in Scotland but not in Ireland. On the other hand, there is evidence that *donas* could signal speech acts involving negation in Irish and Hiberno-English even though its syntactic status was no more than marginal. Moreover, it was a form used for other kinds of lexical borrowing, seen in *donsie* and *donse*, forms with semantically related notions. It is certainly possible that *donas* once functioned as a syntactic negator in varieties of Leinster and Ulster Irish that are now extinct and not well documented. In that case, *sorrow* negation could be viewed as the result of direct influence not only from Scottish Gaelic *donas* but from Irish *donas* as well. However, the preceding interpretation will remain only speculative unless actual examples comparable to *donas blàr* and *donas bonn* come to light. Whether or not they do, it would be unwise to rule out the possibility that some varieties of Irish used *donas* in the ways seen in Scottish Gaelic.

Three other questions concerning *donas* should also be mentioned even though answers to them are still uncertain. The first is how *donas* came to be a euphemism for the Devil in Irish and Scottish Gaelic. The earliest complete translation of the Bible into Scot-

tish Gaelic goes back only to 1801, and uses there of the form *donas* do not show any clear sense involving the Devil even though the form does occur, for example, in the Book of Psalms (X, 7). It would seem, then, that the euphemistic sense of *donas* owes little to Biblical translation in Scotland at least. The second question is how early the euphemism arose. The fact that it is found in both Irish and Scottish Gaelic suggests that this sense may be very ancient—possibly as early as the coming of Christianity to Ireland. The third question is when the possibility of negation developed (no doubt after the development of the euphemistic sense in any case). As noted in section 3, the use of *donas* as a negator goes back to at least the mid-eighteenth century, but this is, of course, nearly two centuries after the first instances of *sorrow* negation in Scots. Similar problems arise in connection with the development of *devil* negation in the Celtic languages. Nevertheless, the earlier appearance of such negation in English probably reflects no more than the discrepancy in the number of written sources for English in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries compared with what little is available for the Celtic languages (Odlin 1995). At this point it does not seem clear whether there is enough source material for Irish and Scottish Gaelic to answer the questions raised here, but clearly it will be worthwhile to try determine just how and when *donas* came to be used in its distinctive senses.

4 Explaining the diffusion of substrate influence

The discussion of sources in the preceding section leaves open a number of possible interpretations of the nature of substrate influence in the ontogeny of *sorrow* negation. Below are the main possibilities:

1. The sole source of *sorrow* negation was *donas*.
2. The sole source was *tubaiste*.
3. Both *donas* and *tubaiste* were sources.
4. Neither *donas* nor *tubaiste* was a source, but some other Celtic word was.
5. No Celtic word was a source.

The second possibility is not likely unless evidence can be found that *tubaiste* has ever been used as a negator or euphemism for the Devil in Scotland. The fourth possibility is even less likely unless evidence comparable to what has been found for *donas* and *tubaiste*

comes to light. The fifth possibility is implausible unless someone can explain why *sorrow* negation would develop in the Celtic lands and not in any part of England far from the Scottish border. If the rise of *sorrow* negation is purely by analogy with *devil* negation, one should expect to find, outside Scotland and Ireland, phrases such as *The sorrow they do* corresponding to phrases such as *The devil they do*, the latter being a possibility in England as early as 1579 (Odlin 1995). Moreover, any explanation that ignores substrate influence must also account for why *sorrow* developed as a euphemism for the Devil in Scotland and Ireland but not in England.

The first explanation is the simplest: *donas* is a substrate influence common to both Scots and Hiberno-English. This explanation may be correct, but the discussion in section 3 indicates that *donas* may never have been a highly elaborated syntactic negator in Ireland. If evidence for such elaboration is ever found, the common-source explanation will certainly be plausible. The available evidence, however, points to the third possibility as the most likely: *donas* and *tubaiste* both seem to be sources for *sorrow* negation.

The third explanation is not only supported best by the available evidence: it is also compatible with a historically plausible scenario for the spread of *sorrow* negation in Ireland. As noted in section 2, the earliest attestations arise in Scotland in the later sixteenth century. During this period there were relatively few speakers of English in Ireland, though the era of intensive settlement and colonization by Britons was well under way (Bliss 1976, Kallen 1995). Although it is possible that *sorrow* negation arose independently in Ireland, whether from the influence of *donas* or *tubaiste*, a more plausible account is that *sorrow* forms were first used by Scottish settlers in Ulster. These settlers, then, would have provided superstrate influence for Irish speakers acquiring Hiberno-English. There is in fact evidence of superstrate influence on the spread of *devil* negation: an Irish character from Ulster uses *deel a bit*, a form that clearly indicates Scots uperstrate influence, in a play dated to 1702/1703 by Bliss (1978, p.138; cf. Odlin 1995, p.21).

It is not clear just how early any Irish speakers would have started acquiring the distinctive senses of *sorrow* (i.e. euphemism and negation); there are no attestations of *sorrow* in the early specimens of Hiberno-English edited by Bliss (1978). Even so, if *devil* negation was in use by 1700, it is certainly plausible that *sorrow*

negation was as well. The spread of *sorrow* may have been slower than the spread of *devil* negation. The latter was probably more widely found in the superstrate as it was used by speakers in England as well as in Scotland, whereas there is no evidence that the distinctive uses of *sorrow* were found in England apart from the border counties of Cumberland and Northumberland. In any case, by the time of William Carleton in the early nineteenth century, there are numerous examples of *sorrow* negation in southern Hiberno-English, e.g. *the sorra one else than Honor Donovan* (Carleton 1839/1992, p.2) and *your born image—the sorra thing else* (ibid., p.12).[10]

The scenario, then, posits superstrate influence from Scots for the spread of *sorrow* negation through Ireland. As for the substrate, its contribution is twofold: 1) the influence of *donas* on earlier varieties of Scots; 2) the influence of *tubaiste* in the interlingual identifications made by speakers of Hiberno-English. The influence of *donas* on Scots need not imply that the Scots speakers in Ulster were bilingual, although some probably were (Adams 1976/1986). All that was needed was an earlier period of bilingualism in Scotland during which *donas* influenced the rise of the distinctive senses of *sorrow*. That period of bilingualism would give way to language shift, but Scots would retain substrate influences of the earlier period in various ways, including *devil* negation and *sorrow* negation. This development of substrate influence is hardly unusual: similar patterns of language shift have been noted for other regions (cf. Muysken 1984, Thomason and Kaufman 1988, Odlin 1995). The scenario allows for—indeed, requires—the interaction of substrate and superstrate. Once Scottish settlers were present in Ulster to model *sorrow* as euphemism and negation, speakers of Irish could identify such uses with similar uses of *tubaiste* and perhaps *donas*

Although this scenario is somewhat complex, it accounts well for two key facts. First, speakers of Hiberno-English did not widely use other superstrate forms besides *sorrow*. *Woe*, *misery*, *mischief*, *misfortune*, and *evil* are all possible translation equivalents of *tubaiste* and/or *donas*, but only *sorrow* seems to have been adopted, a fact readily understood in terms of superstrate influence from Scots. Second, the scenario allows for the possibility that speakers of Hiberno-English made an interlingual identification between *tubaiste* and *sorrow* which was not made in Scotland. Even though *sorrow* negation probably got its impetus from Scottish Gaelic *donas*,

it would be easy enough for learners of English in Ireland to equate *tubaiste* and *sorrow*. A similar explanation indeed seems necessary to account for the diffusion of *after* perfects in Hiberno-English, as in *She is after selling the boat*. Harris (1984, p.319) cites two different Irish patterns as possible substrate sources, *tar éis* and *i ndiaidh*, both of which are equivalent to English *after*. Moreover, there is yet another pattern in Scottish Gaelic, which normally uses *air* instead of *tar éis* or *i ndiaidh*. Regardless of whether learners of English used *air*, *tar éis*, or *i ndiaidh* in their native language, it was possible for individuals to make interlingual identifications between any of these three forms and *after* perfects (cf. Boretzky 1993, pp.82f.). What holds true for *after* perfects likely holds true for *sorrow* negation as well.

Another advantage of the suggested explanation is that it is consonant with theoretical approaches taken in other language contact situations. Specifically, the explanation resembles what is called the Founder Principle by Mufwene, who argues

> that the founder populations, including speakers of both lexifiers and substrate languages, played a greater role than hitherto considered in determining which specific features received selective advantage over their competitors during the formation of creoles. (1994, p.1)

Whether or not Hiberno-English can be viewed as a creole, the Founder Principle reconciles the contribution of *sorrow* from the Scots lexifier (i.e. superstrate) and the contribution of *donas/tubaiste* from the Celtic substrate.

5 Summary and conclusion

Before moving to the implications, I will summarize and add a few words of caution about the findings. The uses of *sorrow* as negator and as euphemism probably reflect Celtic substrate influence. Structural evidence indicates that *sorrow* negation has grammaticalized properties similar to those for *devil* negation. Geographical and chronological evidence suggests that *sorrow* negation developed early in Scotland and that it was restricted mainly to Scotland and Ireland. Cultural evidence shows *sorrow* negation to be part of a long-standing tradition of taboo and euphemism, one not unique to the Celtic lands but one certainly robust in those

regions. Although several words in Irish and Scottish Gaelic are partial translation equivalents for *sorrow*, only two seem to have attested uses as negators and euphemisms for the Devil: *donas* and *tubaiste*. Of these, *donas* seems to have been an especially important word in Scotland and Ireland although it may never have been a fully-fledged negator in Irish. The most likely explanation for the spread of this distinctive type of negation is that *sorrow* forms were first used by Scottish settlers in Ulster who would have provided superstrate influence for Irish speakers acquiring Hiberno-English. The use of *sorrow* by the Scottish settlers probably reflects an earlier identification by bilinguals in Scotland between *sorrow* and *donas*, while its use by bilinguals in Ireland reflects an identification between *sorrow* and *tubaiste*.

The above explanation is provisional, and three limitations of this study should be noted. The lexicographical evidence for the Gaelic forms is not nearly as extensive as the evidence for the uses of *sorrow* in Hiberno-English and Scottish English. There are no dictionaries for Irish or Scottish Gaelic comparable in scope or thoroughness with the *OED* or the *EDD*.[11] Moreover, I myself have no native-speaker intuitions on the use of *donas* and other forms, and the many native speakers I have consulted are uncertain about what form or forms would correspond to *sorrow*. The third, and probably the greatest, problem is that *sorrow* as a negator or as a euphemism is rarely heard in modern Ireland or Scotland. I have not met individuals who report that they themselves use the forms, but a few have given me examples they have known older people to use. For instance, Mr Rory Kieran of Newry reports having heard all of the following: *Ah! son of sorra*, *The sorra be off you*, and *Sorra sinner so*, the latter being a response to the question *Did you see anyone in the city?*

Sorrow negation is a receding phenomenon, and its rarity nowadays probably reflects the forces of modernity that have weakened tradition in Scotland and Ireland as well as elsewhere. Even though religion is still important in both lands, no one is likely to be brought before an ecclesiastical or secular court for saying *devil a penny you payed for my drink*. Moreover, the deeper sources of taboo and euphemism are also less powerful. Although many still view the universe as a place where uncontrollable forces have power, science and technology have made it seem much less mysterious and, in

that sense, less threatening. In such a world, the need for euphemisms for supernatural creatures may still be felt, but not as strongly as in earlier times.

The implications of this study are straightforward, and can be summarized as follows:

1. Not all instances of substrate influence are transparent. However, in order to demonstrate substrate effects in cases such as *sorrow*, every effort must be made to identify both the structural and non-structural evidence.
2. If *sorrow* is a recessive feature, as argued here, it is mistaken to assume that contemporary Hiberno-English is always a window on earlier periods.
3. If we do not have available from native speakers now alive the data we need, literary sources are likely to be the best possible evidence. In dialect research there has been an understandable caution about using literature, but such sources should not be dismissed a priori.
4. New resources besides dictionaries should be able to help get a clearer picture of cases such as *sorrow*. Databases such as the Northern Ireland Transcribed Corpus of Speech and the CURIA project show the potential of new approaches for learning about the syntactic and semantic behavior of forms in the substrate and superstrate languages. As such, these methods will no doubt help researchers to make further advances on the issue of language contact in the Celtic lands.

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Notes

1. Long before Burke, many playwrights, novelists, and poets developed a tradition of dialect writing that suggests an awareness of cross-linguistic influence. Even so, scholarly discussion of the sources of Hiberno-English has occurred mainly within the last hundred years.

2. For dictionary citations, no page numbers are given. Unless otherwise noted, the citations for *sorrow* and *devil* will be found under their respective lemmas.

3. For a more extended discussion of grammaticalization, another paper focusing on *devil* negation (Odlin 1995) may be consulted. The term "Gaelic" in Table 1 and elsewhere in the article is used to indicate both Irish and Scottish Gaelic.

4. It is not clear just how early *sorrow* was used as a euphemism for the Devil. Several instances from Middle English and Early Modern English are clearly imprecations but not necessarily references to the Devil, e.g. *God yeve thee sorwe!* in the prologue of Chaucer's "Manciple's Tale" (Fisher 1989, p.338). Although *sorwe* here is probably not a reference to the Devil, it seems likely that other imprecations do have this specialized sense, e.g. *sorrow tak him that's sae mean* in a line from Robert Burns cited in the *OED*. In this latter case, *sorrow tak* can be plausibly considered an analogical extension of *devil take*. Although the use of *sorrow* as a euphemism likely preceded its use as a negator, there remains the problem of saying just how much earlier it was so used.

5. The *OED* citation of 1573 is actually not the earliest because the

DOST has a citation (s.v. *jummil*) from *The Wif of Awchtirmwchthy*, a work which appears in the Bannatyne manuscript, which, according to Kratzmann (1989), was compiled around 1568: *the sorow crap of butter he gatt* (= not a bit of butter did he get) (Ritchie 1928, p.322). The same text (ibid.) has another instance of *sorrow* negation: *sorrow spark of it would ȝyrne* (would turn). It should be noted that the lemma *sorrow* in the *DOST* has not yet appeared in print.

6. Both examples come from transcribed interviews conducted with speakers in midland counties by James Delaney, a collector for the Irish Folklore Commission. I have checked many of Delaney's transcriptions against the original tape and found them to be highly accurate. The first example appears in Vol. 1736, p.214 of the Main Manuscripts collection at the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin, and the second in Vol. 1772, pp.48f.

7. Frazer does not have anything on *sorrow*, nor does Havers (1946) in a lengthy monograph on linguistic taboo. Both, however, have extensive examples of taboo and euphemism involving supernatural creatures. Other sources are cited in a recent study of euphemism (Allan and Burridge 1991) and in a bibliography of early Irish literature (Cross 1952). Again, there does not seem to be any source that considers the question of *sorrow*.

8. I would like to thank Dónall Ó Baoill for pointing this possibility out to me.

9. Aside from Hiberno-English and Scots, Manx English is another variety that uses *donsie* (Moore, Morrison, and Goodwin 1924). I have not found any information that *donas* functioned as a euphemism or negator in Manx.

10. These examples were pointed out to me by Bruce Bolling.

11. There is, of course, the historical dictionary published by the Royal Irish Academy (1983). However, the treatment of *donas* and other forms is sketchy indeed: there are no examples of negation under this lemma (or under *díabul*), and the citations for *donas* do not offer much help as to how it became a euphemism for the Devil.

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